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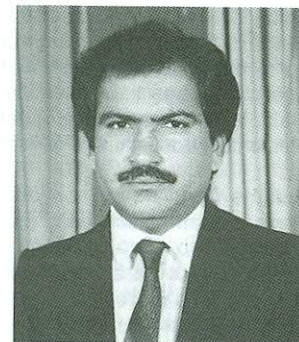
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RESEARCH PAPER

DEVELOPING A VIBRANT MODEL FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

By
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Abstract

The public education system of Pakistan mostly offers children a prescriptive catalogue of knowledge what Freire (1972) calls it a 'banking concept' in education. Hawes and Stephens (1990) argue that today's schools and children are invariably the victim of yesterday's system. During the last three decades, the quality of education has become a serious concern among the policy makers and donor agencies. In general terms, quality is defined in term of efficiency in achieving the desired students learning outcomes predetermined in the policies. In Pakistan, three types of education reforms namely efficiency; quality; curricular-based (Riddell, 1998) were launched but these seemed to have failed to achieve their desired targets. This can be exemplified from a general estimate that half of the children who complete primary schooling cannot read, write and do basic arithmetic which presents a dismal scenario of elementary education in Pakistan. I agree with Riddell (1998) that the quality of colonial educational system is undoubtedly inappropriate for a post-colonial system since the focus is now more on creating a leadership. In order to understand the issue of quality education, Adams (1993) suggests six elements of quality education namely

quality as reputation; quality as resources and inputs; quality as process; quality as content; quality as outputs and outcomes; and quality as value added. However, I would like to add another element of quality as effective and reflective school community leadership for ensuring accountability, which may lead to a sustainable improvement in quality education.

In the early 90's, the Government of Pakistan brought about a change in the organizational and management structure through Social Action Programme (I & II) in order to mobilize community participation in the school management affairs. This paradigm shift led to develop a participatory decision-making strategy embedded in the decentralized model of educational management. This provides community with a real 'voice and choice' in the self-school management affairs. Research indicates that a positive relationship between schools and community is considered a prerequisite for the success of any educational programme (Hicks, 1956, Sinah, 1976, Ansari 1988, Shah and Shaukat, 1990, Kumar 1996, and Memon, M. et al. 1999). Therefore, the transformation of the schools is only possible by involving community actively in the process of decision-making, which will eventually lead to enhance community capabilities and empowerment. In order to improve the quality of elementary education in Pakistan, a vibrant model for improving quality of elementary education has been developed which encompasses school management and leadership, community participation, and accountability, teachers'

professional development, curriculum and instructional strategies, school supervision and monitoring, and students learning outcomes. This model is guided by school vision, policy, research and practice that will enhance community capabilities for sustainable quality improvement of elementary education in Pakistan.

Introduction

Underlying the national education policies, several education reforms were made in Pakistan through 'top down' approach but these reforms just offered a prescriptive catalogue of knowledge what Freire (1972) calls 'banking concept' in education through which students learn the factual information that may not be related to their real life. Hence, schools still work underlying the assumptions of the 'transmission' paradigm and students are encouraged to learn through memorization and drill practice, which does not help students to develop their critical or creative thinking for adapting and anticipating changes in their life. Botkin et al. (1979) mentions that learning is the process to deal with new situation. If the students are not exposed to a challenging situation, they may not be able to enjoy the process of learning. Hawes and Stephens (1990) maintain that today's youth are invariably the target of yesterday's system. The nature of these reforms was mostly related to the curriculum, supervision and teacher education rather than organizational policies. Riddell (1998) classifies these reforms into three main categories, which include efficiency, quality and curricular

based. On the whole, these reforms did not contribute towards improving quality of education in Pakistan.

The issue of the quality of education in schools which has even received widespread attention in the developed countries (see National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983 (USA), DES, 1985, and OFSTED, 1995 (UK)). But the issue of quality of education in the developing countries generally (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991) and particularly in Pakistan (Memon, 1996) warrants explicit policies for quality improvement. Several studies have been conducted to understand the factors that have affected the quality of education. These studies tend to blame teachers on the basis that they are not adequately professionally prepared to face the challenges of teaching as a profession. In the past, much emphasis was given on quantity rather than quality in order to enhance the literacy rate and increase the participation rate in primary schools. In spite of these efforts, the Government of Pakistan could not achieve the target of universal primary education in Pakistan. Recognizing the importance of quality of education, the Government Pakistan through its national educational policy (1998-2010) has put major thrust on the improving the quality of elementary education. Thus, efforts are being made to maintain equilibrium between quantity and quality. Elementary education is considered as a hub of education system of any country. If the right type of education were not provided at this stage our students would not be able to contribute to social and economic devel-

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opment of the country. There is generally held opinion in Pakistan that the parents and students do not consider education as a worthwhile activity. Therefore, half of the school going children stay out of schools which is very clear message to the policy makers and planners that they need to change the education policies/plans for improving quality of elementary education in Pakistan.

Fuller's (1987) study on determinants that affect schooling provides an insight to certain extent, but it does not provide a holistic picture that can help in developing a comprehensive definition of quality education. Riddell (1998) maintains that the quality of colonial educational system in undoubtedly inappropriate for a post-colonial system since the focus is now more on creating a leadership. To me quality education is directly related to the issue of quality of leadership at the community and school level. I agree with Hawes and Stephens (1990) that we need to examine the implications of basic education and classroom realities, otherwise, the planners who intend to seek to improve quality and measure achievement would work largely in dark. They further mention that the policy makers have not yet been able to combat the issue of quality education because of three reasons. These are: a) lack of expertise and research traditions to embark on qualitative inquiries which are illuminative and descriptive in nature; b) having difficulty in obtaining and handling qualitative information; and c) the complexity of the notion of quality education, inquiries and actions. They further went to say that we need to prepare our young generation in a way so that they are able to face challenges of radical different socio-economic futures, preserve and strengthen the moral, cultural and spiritual values.

Concept of Quality Education

Different people have different criteria and indicators in mind to describe quality of education (Fuller 1986; Hughes, 1988). Hawes and Stephens (1990) argue that the definition of quality depends on what is question and whose questions. They mention that quality is perceived by parent as 'examination results'; inspector as 'meeting general standards'; chairman of board of governors as 'good use of money'; professor as good teaching and learning; member of parliament as 'effective

work orientation'; clergy as 'character building' and elderly villager as 'conservation of traditional values'. In this case perhaps no one is right or wrong because of their own perception and conception of quality of education. However, some may relate quality to input and others may relate it to output or process. This suggests that there is no inherent problem with quality of education because of different prevailing notions and interpretations embedded in different personal and professional orientations. I agree with Cheng and Cheung (1997) that the lack of clear concept of education quality restricts the approach to the management and enhancement of quality of education.

Hence, the concept of quality of education has always been vague and sometime it is oversimplified, therefore, it does not contribute to resolve the issue of the quality of education (Cheng 1995); The term quality has been defined in different ways such as 'conformance of education output to planned goals' (Gilmore 1974); 'defect avoidance of education' (Crosby 1979); 'excellence' (Peters and Waterman 1982); 'value added' (Hopkins 1987), 'meeting stakeholders expectations' (Parasuraman et al. 1985); 'fitness of educational outcome and experience for use' (Juran and Gryna 1988) 'quality as efficiency in attaining desired outputs' (Hawes and Stephens 1990) and 'academic and social effectiveness' (Reynolds and Cuttance 1992). This suggests that there is no consensus definition, however, these definitions are highly correlated. Hawes and Stephens (1990) define quality as follows:

- Efficiency in meeting set goals
- Relevance to human and environmental needs and conditions
- Pursuit of excellence and human betterment

Quality is dynamic and multi dimensional which never stays the same. Adams (1993) suggests six elements of quality education namely quality as reputation; quality as resources and inputs; quality as process; quality as content; quality as outputs and outcomes; and quality as value added. However, I would like to add another element of quality as effective and reflective school community leadership for ensuring accountability, which may lead to a sustainable improvement in the quality of education. Cheng and

Cheung (1997) define quality as '...the character of the set of elements in the input, process and output of the education system that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations' (p.452). They argue that quality is a multi-dimensional concept and it is difficult for schools to meet the expectations. Literature on organizational and school effectiveness (see Cameron and Whetten 1983, Cheng 1996, Cheng and Tam 1997) proposes seven models of quality of education. These include Goal-and-Specification Model, Resource-Input Model, Process-Input Model, Satisfaction Model, Legitimacy model, Absence-of Problems Models, and Organizational Learning Model. This suggests a need for multi-models because each school works within different conditions and environments. Cheng and Cheung (1997) argue that this multi model of quality education will help to develop a long term planning to achieve total school education quality. However, a strong emphasis is placed on Total Quality Management (see Bradely 1993, Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993; Greenwood and Gaunt 1994).

Quality of Education in Pakistan

To an estimate four of every five children who attend primary school in Pakistan are in government schools. Enrolment rate in government schools has slightly increased, but there is a general impression among the people that government schools are highly inefficient and reflects severe problem of school governance. Instead of several education reforms in Pakistan, education has not yet been able to meet the challenges and demands posed by the societal changes. Mostly schools are being operated under the industrial world-view that reflects the technical and rational perspective of education. School management follows the tradition of 'boss management' underlying the principles of 'top down' approach, which does not allow schools to develop their own programmes for their students. McNeil (1986) mentions that the school management controls teachers and students, as a result they lose their interest, which has affected the quality of education.

As mentioned above, improving quality of education is not just an

issue of the eastern countries but the western countries are also grappling with this matter. However, the issue of quality education seems critical in the eastern countries (Fuller, 1994). It is worth mentioning here that the quality of education has been the major thrust in the policies and plans of Pakistan. Pakistan is among many developing countries, which has shown strong commitment to improving quality of education. Currently, education in Pakistan is facing many problems. These are access, equity, quality and sustainability. The social action programme is launched to help improve the functional distribution of financial resources, effective utilization of resources, and greater involvement of parents and communities.

In Pakistan, schools have been responding to the structural changes without having clear guidelines how to manage schools effectively. Drucker (1993) mentions that the position of schools as 'producers' and 'distributors' of knowledge is bound to be challenged and an effective school management model is bound to succeed. The change should be directly related to social change through transformation of schools. This can only happen if we learn to 'define the quality of education and productivity of education for which we need to have a shared understanding about the quality of knowledge' (Drucker 1995). In the context of western world, Caldwell (1997) identified three parallel tracks, which have influenced the education reforms. These tracks are: a) creating systems of self managing public schools; b) unrelenting focus on restructuring learning and teaching; c) reengineering school education. But in Pakistan, perhaps schools are going through a track of the implementation of self-managing schools but we need to know whether it is valid for bringing about change. The emphasis of change must be on the structure, culture of schools. Schools should respond to change in an incremental and piecemeal fashion. If the schools have to move towards decentralization, they have to create a new structure and procedure of school management. West-Burnham (1997) reminds us that we need to develop a coherent and systematic school management model which should embody clarity of components of school management, and the purpose of school management. This will lead us to

develop a notion of Total Quality Management (TQM) which provides a powerful mechanism for ensuring consistency of response. It provides the vehicle for making these procedures intrinsic to school management processes and ensuring effective response. However, Everard and Morris (1990) seem to be critical about the use of total quality management. They offer, the following objections:

- Managerialism denies professionalism and educational values
- hierarchical accountability diminishes collegiality and autonomy
- leadership aspects are denied
- management is inevitably manipulative
- educational outcomes cannot be managed
- schools cannot be made effective and successful without the parental involvement.

West-Burnham (1997) has rightly mentioned that the demands are increasing and the resource base is diminishing. Looking at the pace of development, we need to create a new school management system allowing the local community to participate actively in the day to day school affairs. Morris (1998) mentions that the quality of elementary schooling in government schools is so uneven that fewer than half the children who complete the first five grades can actually read, write and do arithmetic, and thus are poorly prepared for the adult world of work. However, they take an average of eight years to complete the five-year primary cycle. He also pointed out a disparity between females and males. According to him Pakistan has 52 girls for every 100 boys in primary schools, which is worse than in any developing countries. Basic education should be considered as fundamental building block to the generation that they are able to participate fully in the social and economic development of the country. Education should enable the people to learn and adapt to new challenges throughout their lives and play active role in society. Education should not be restricted to just literacy and numeracy but it should help individuals how to think critically and solve their own problems. The government of Pakistan has already set out the target of universal primary education by the year 2010, which has to be replaced with universal elementary education. Although, it seems difficult for the government to achieve this

target in near future but at least the plans and policies should be devoted to this direction. Morris (1998) mentions that education policy should address the question of quality of education, access of elementary education, efficiency of education, management supervision. He further emphasizes that quality of education should meet the national norms. This can happen through improving quality of learning in elementary schools by strengthening instruction, providing learning environment and conditions and schools should be developed in order to meet maximum standard of performance. Darling-Hammond (1997) believes that 'ordinary schools can succeed in extraordinary ways when they refocus their work on the needs of students rather than the demands of bureaucracies' (p.33). Thus, there is a need of an adequate management leadership that is essential for the implementation of any educational change. Glasser (1990) maintains that 'lead management' encourages the people to devote time and energy to do the quality work. Also Glasser (1990) seems to be inspired by Deming's work (1986) that quality is never the problem rather it is solution to the which can be done through 'lead management' approach.

Policy shift towards community participation for capacity building

The issue of quality of education seems a management concern. It is important that the policy makers and planners and educationalists should develop a framework how to manage the quality of education in Pakistan. In the early 90's, the Government of Pakistan in collaboration with lending agencies developed the Social Action Programme (SAP) in order to address the felt-needs of the society. SAP is considered as the first cohesive and strategic programme, which provides a strategic framework for social development. This programme is based on integrated approach through amalgamation of fragmented projects, which always die down due to weak implementation strategy. Therefore, this program is considered as programmatic and a radical organizational reform to achieve the cross-sector objectives. The first phase of SAP is over and the second phase has just begun which emphasizes the participatory approach in order to mobilize community participation in the school management affairs. Literature sug-

gests that the traditional approaches to managing schools do not seem to be appropriate any more, hence, alternatives have to be identified. SAP policy shift has had to develop a participatory decision-making strategy embedded in the decentralized model of educational management. This provides community with a real 'voice and choice' in the self-school management affairs. Research indicates that a positive relationship between schools and community is considered a prerequisite for the success of any educational programme (Hicks, 1956, Sinah, 1976, Ansari 1988, Shah and Shaukat, 1990, Kumar 1996 and Memon, M. et al. 1999). Therefore, the transformation of the schools is only possible by involving community actively in the process of decision-making which will eventually lead to enhance community capabilities and empowerment. Aspinwall (1998) has rightly mentioned that there is a need to draw upon all resources that are available, and schools are increasingly looking to the world outside education for models, systems and structures that will help them to respond more effectively to constant pressure and demands for change' (p.1).

Keeping in view, the past experience of the centralization, now more emphasis is given on decentralization, which has become a worldwide education reform fad or fashion. There has been practice that in most cases, the developing countries follow the developed countries' experiences. Leithwood and Menzies (1998) call as 'wave of wealthy nations' which has to spread to developing nation. Decentralization in terms of site or school based management was also of the experiences of the developed countries. They further mention that the decentralization has little positive effects on students learning. In the context of Latin America, Schiefelbein and Wolf (1992) mentioned that it is hard to find the impact of decentralization on students learning. Hanson (1997) also came to the same conclusion. However, he reminds us that the decentralization is not only variable to effect students learning, there are other socio-economic and organizational variables. In the context of Africa regarding decentralization Whiteacre (1997) has also drawn the similar conclusion. To me decentralization should not just deal with transferring powers at the grass root level but it should also deal with

accountability of the distribution and use of resources. Decentralization should not be seen as an end but as a means to an end. However, the successful education reforms have a central element of community, parents, and students' involvement in school management and governance. The real community involvement should come up from the ground rather than imposing from the central or provincial government. Morris (1998) mentions that in order to improve the quality of education we need to bring about change in policy area at the programmatic (improved quality instructional material, building assessment capacity of schools, improved students learning outcomes, effectiveness of programme intervention, recruitment of teachers from within the locality, consolidation of existing facilities, increasing local decision making etc.) and organizational level (strengthening of management and administrative capacities, improved budgeting process, facilitate greater community involvement, design implementation mechanism, monitoring school performance etc.). The quality of education must be related to improving students learning, increased students enrolment, retention, completion, better teaching, instructional material, and effective school management.

Vibrant Model for Improving the Quality of Education

The elementary education in Pakistan has not yet achieved its target because of several reasons which are: low enrolment especially for girls, high repetition rate, low level students' achievement, poor quality of teachers and their pedagogy, lack of adequate content knowledge, lack of parents' involvement. The list of problem can go on and on. At the government level, some efforts are made in collaboration with the lending agencies to improve the existing scenario of education in Pakistan. Due to poor documentation, lack of research and review of these efforts, it is hardly known to the public about the impact on these initiatives. In order to improve the situation within the framework of 'Education For All', many countries initiated education reforms but the general experience is not quite impressive since 'many reform failed rather than succeeded'. (Farrell, 1997 and Alvarez and Ruiz Caseres, 1997, Ravitch and Vinovskis, 1996, Tyack and Cuban

1996). There is a general impression that the centrally — driven, top down, elite-defined and command-oriented education reforms rarely work.

In order to improve the quality of elementary education in Pakistan, the following vibrant model for improving quality of education has been developed that may help to improve the quality of elementary education in Pakistan. This model encompasses school leadership, community mobilization, empowerment and accountability, teachers' professional development, supervision, monitoring, curriculum and instructional approaches, and students learning outcomes. This model has been embedded in school vision, policy and guided by research and practice.

school leadership as one of the significant factors that affects the quality of education. There is a generally held opinion among the educators and researchers that school improvement is directly related to the nature of school leadership. It guides, influences and leads teachers and others in schools. Terry cited in Smith and Piele (1996) that leadership is the activity of 'influencing people to strive willingly for group goals' (p.2). They further mention that 'Good leaders operate out of a clear understanding of their values, goals and beliefs and also those of their followers' (p. 3).

Drawing upon the work of Louis and Miles (1990), Fullan (1991) mention that leadership involves articulating a vision, getting shared ownership,

proactive to create the community of learners in the schools. The head-teachers should be encouraged to provide necessary leadership to teachers, students and community. This will help them to appreciate and value their role and they will be able to provide professional support and guidance to the teachers. This will generate an 'inside' school leadership, which will encourage head-teachers to make their school effective. However, there is a need to develop a broad and shared consensus about the need of school leadership. In order to develop a sustainable partnership with community to enhance the community capacity for their own initiation for the promotion of education.

• Community participation and accountability

In the recent years, much emphasis is placed on community mobilization and empowerment for the promotion of education in Pakistan. Literature on community participation suggests the strong relationship between sustainability of change and community participation. In Pakistan, access of education, quality and sustainability are the major hurdles, which have to be overcome through dialogues among the community and policy makers. Mobilization of community facilitates for creating a sense of ownership of social development, improving the quality and providing accessibility of education, particularly for girls, in the rural and semi urban areas. The level of involvement and participation of the community at large and among parents has increased tremendously and shown promising sign for the future. The community-based schools have started to play the role of change in the local communities, and influenced the local culture and attitude towards change and development. Community participation and management of schools have increased and enhanced. (AKF, USA Proposal, 1998). Since, SAP aims to address the issue of effective community participation for making education system decentralized. Riddell (1998) alerts us that decentralization dealing with administrative matters is without any 'teeth'. However, community participation in schools has become an alternative model of self-school management, which will lead towards accountability, quality of education and democratic environment. Riddell (1998) mentions that democratization helps increased participation enhance school com-

munity relations collaboration of and participation of parents required for school self-management. The locally managed schools help improve accountability, which is required for school improvement. Verspoor (1992) argues that the quality improvement needs institutional development by providing professional support, research, evaluation and staff development.

• Teachers' professional development

In the past, several efforts were made to improve the quality of teaching through pre and in-service teacher education programmes. But, these efforts failed to make any significant impact on teachers' teaching quality and students learning outcomes. Perhaps, these programmes lacked an adequate philosophy, clear vision and strategy. These programmes are considered to be theory-driven rather a blend of both theory and practice. The teacher education programmes should not just complete the formality but these should be well planned and be based on the reflective practice, which can help them to make reflective practitioners. There is a need to have more school based teacher education programmes. The professional development is considered as highly complex and sensitive area which has to be dealt with by a great care and planning having expertise and knowledge of teacher education. The learning coordinators are already working with teachers but because of their lack of content knowledge, classroom management skills, instructional strategies etc. they tend to play their role as inspectors rather than professional developers. Therefore, there is a need to create a cadre of the mentors as professional leaders. Each mentor should work with teachers in a cluster consisting of five (05) elementary schools who should be responsible for the school based professional development programmes two days in month. Each mentor should have at least bachelor qualification with B.Ed. However, there should be a separate professional development programme for mentors. These programmes may be conducted by the Provincial Institutes for Teacher education through professionally developed teacher educators who should know the innovative approaches in teacher education.



Fig. 1. Wheel of Quality Improvement

• School management and leadership

In Pakistan, the role of school leadership in elementary schools has not yet been fully recognized which shows that the people are not yet aware of the significance of head-teacher's role in the improvement of quality of education. Even the head-teachers themselves are not aware of their role and responsibility. This led them to act as administrators rather than professional management leaders (Memon, 1998). However, only few studies have identified the

evolutionary planning whereas management concerns with negotiating demands and resources, co-ordination, and coping with persistent problems. The headteachers play a dynamic and multidimensional role. I agree with Southworth (1998) that schools are to be managed and led, therefore, importance of management and leadership cannot be denied, nevertheless, there is no substitute for leader. We are about to enter the 21st century, we need to have a strong school leadership who should have a deeper understanding of education, charismatic style and

• Curriculum and pedagogical strategies

Currently, the schools are following the national curriculum, which does not leave much room for teachers to enrich it. Therefore, teachers become slaves of curriculum, which should not be the case. Teachers as professionals and practitioners should have professional autonomy to do enrichment within the national framework. This will help teachers to make curriculum as much relevant as they can. They can also use a variety of instructional approaches in order to teach curriculum effectively. In the present circumstances, the teachers may not be able to enrich curriculum since they do not have adequate knowledge and skills to enrich curriculum. There is a need to empower teachers to develop their understanding about the commonplaces and their dynamics in order to improve the quality of education. The teachers should be professionally developed in a way that they should become accountable for the effective delivery of the intended curriculum. This will help to bridge a gap between the intended and actual curriculum.

• School supervision and monitoring

Literature suggests the supervision of school and teaching help improve the commitment of teachers that lead towards improving quality of education. Cheng 1996 and Cheung and Cheng 1996 suggest five processes of self managing schools. These include environment analysis, planning and structuring, staffing and directing, implementing and monitoring and evaluating. The current national education policy emphasizes the importance of supervision and monitoring in education. In Pakistan, new structure of supervision has been introduced by induction of learning coordinators who have to work with teachers in order to help them in academic and professional matters. But, there is general impression that the learning coordinators are neither academically nor professionally sound to help teachers in the academic and professional matters. In practice, school supervision should be a regular feature in schools in monitoring school performance. School supervision has been assigned to district education officers and the deputies who are always busy either in their table work or attending meetings with the

seniors or juniors who never find adequate time to carry on their supervisory work. In many cases, they are not professionally developed to conduct supervision and write a report to share with schools and other stakeholders. One of the purposes of the supervision is to establish accountability, which is very important for improving quality of education. Supervision should contain the internal and external phases. The supervisory personnel along with the community members of the school locality should do the internal phase, which should be on on-going basis. The external phase should be done once in three years conducted by the professionals and academics. The external report should also be shared with schools so that they can see where they stand and how to move further. However, the education department can work out further mechanism of external supervision.

• Students learning outcomes

The learning process should prepare children to face the new situation and find out their own ways of dealing with it. In order to do that, teachers and other stakeholders have to create a learning environment. Teachers should provide opportunity to students to work on their own to develop their confidence, problem solving and critical thinking skills. Teachers have to move away from the rote learning approach to concept formation for understanding. The purpose of students' assessment should not penalize the students to pass or fail them but to help them to determine their capability of application of ideas in their real life situation. They should be exposed to the problematic situation in which they can work together to learn from each others experiences. Teachers and other stakeholders should also understand the importance of students learning outcomes, which is directly related with the quality of education.

Conclusion

The model has been developed based on the personal experiences and lessons learned from the literature. The model has six major inter-related elements. Each element is equally important for enhancing the quality of education. All elements create synergy to make schools effective. There is a substantive body of evidence that the quality of educa-

tion cannot improve without effective schools leadership. Schools are changing places, therefore, the headteachers need to be visionary and imaginary to meet the increased demands of their role. If the schools are to be improved, a strong leadership has to be provided to them in order to achieve the desired targets. Stoll and Fink (1996) have determined five categories of schools which include moving (effective), struggling (try for effectiveness) sinking (failing), cruising (effective without preparing students for better life) and strolling (neither effective nor effective). In order to work with such schools one should not look forward to seeking a 'magic answer' or 'quick fixes' (Stoll and Myers 1998). This indicates that a single management leadership style may not be applicable to the other school. This shows that leadership is not a simple matter, in fact it requires open mind and heart to conceive and appreciate things in a proper context. I agree with Southworth (1998) that leadership involves a number of concepts and actions including vision, values, the goals of the school and an approach to change and development. Also, no single style is appropriate for all situations. The schools need transformational leadership, which focuses on collaborative culture required for effective involvement of community. Quality should deal with the process and product of schooling. The learning process should prepare children to face the new situation and find out their own ways of dealing with it.

Efforts are already made to get community involved since the community members are considered as strategic levers in the process of improving schools. Community participation helps in many ways. For example, it helps schools in their day-to-day management, creates a sense of ownership, increases the willingness among the parents for sending their children to schools, establishes mechanism, assures minimum standards of the quality, organizes and strengthens community education, creates sustainability in the programmes, develops networks with other communities, develops advocacy skills through capacity building of community for sustainability. Partnership between schools and communities is required for increasing level of consciousness and the communities may be encouraged to share lessons learnt about best management practices. Friere

(1985) suggests two prong approach what he calls 'language of possibility' (exploring viable options, choices) and 'language of critique' (reflecting for understanding and making meaning). This process will help enhance capabilities of community by generating dialogue and discourse for developing a shared vision and consensus for the improving quality of education.

Decentralization has become a buzzword, which should not be considered as a panacea for improving schooling management practices required for the quality improvement. In each context, decentralization is used in different connotations. If a selected group of the local people is authorized by the central or provincial government, that may not be a true sense of decentralization which will leave the local community out of the scene which may have adverse effect on the education reforms. In the western world, the emphasis has been given to school-based management (Cheng 1996) enabling schools to become autonomous and initiate their own efforts to improve quality education which did not help combat the issue of quality education because of inadequate conceptual framework and unclear conception of quality education (Cheng and Cheung 1997). In order to minimize the issue of the quality of education, the proposed model may be employed and adapted according to the context. The local actors who are the strategic levers have to be involved to make school and community partnership successful. On the other hand, it will gear towards building community capacity for sustainable improvement in education.

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